

## **Mud Creek Corridor**

The Mud Creek Corridor provides a crucial but tenuous link between the Durham Division of Duke Forest and the main New Hope Valley and Jordan Lake wildlife areas. Historically this corridor may also have been part of an important overland link connecting the Cape Fear and Neuse River Basins, although that role appears to have vanished with the construction of the I-85/ US 70 highway strips (see **Bennett Place Upland Forest**).

The headwaters of Mud Creek arise within several steep ravines located in the heart of the Durham Division of Duke Forest, along the eastern edge of the Carolina Slate Belt. After passing through the Erwin Road Swamp at the southern edge of the Durham Division, the creek traverses an approximately two-mile reach that is becoming increasingly hemmed in by development. Mud Creek continues as a connector to Pickett Rd. and then to New Hope Creek. Although the floodplain retains its forest cover over most of this reach, at one point the creek flows through a set of pipe culverts within the center of the Garrett Farms development. Below Garrett Farms, Mud Creek flows into the Triassic Basin where its floodplain is confluent with that of New Hope Creek, forming the Mt. Moriah Road Bottomlands.

Although several significant bottlenecks appear to exist along this corridor, particularly at Garrett Farms, several species are still able to traverse the entire length of Mud Creek. Otter and beaver, for example, were recorded at both ends of the corridor and mink tracks were found under the bridge crossing at Pickett Road, as well as downstream within the Mt. Moriah Road Bottomlands. Forest birds, herps, for butterflies can also probably make the trip all the way from New Hope Creek to Duke Forest, at least as long as the strips of bottomland hardwoods remain intact along the creek.